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„SCYTHIAN" AND „DACIAN" MILITARY MEN IN EGYPT, PALESTINE AND ITALY IN THE 6TH - 7TH CENTURIES[1]

The tens of thousands of papyri discovered in Egypt are containing many useful data for the economic, social, political and military history, including the final period of the Roman domination in this province[2]. For the military history, the papyri provide pieces of information not mentioned in other sources, concerning the military units and their members. The first part of this study examines a number of eight papyri dated in the 6th century, which are attesting an unit composed of „Scythians".

The oldest piece is dated in 546–548, and comes from the village of Aphrodites, near Antaiopolis (Qau el-Kebir), in the central Egypt. The most recent is from 567–570. In this series, a single papyrus has an unclear date, sometime in the second half of the 6th century: an expenses receipt from Apollonopolis (Edfou), which mentions a person called Narses, *draconarius* of the Scythians (Ναρσῆ δρακοναρίου τῶν Σκυθῶν)[3]. *Draconarius* was the bearer of the *draco* standard. The standard with wolf head and snake body was introduced in the Roman army in the 2nd century, remaining in use until the 6th century. It is not clear whence it was borrowed, from the Dacians, from the Sarmats, or from the Parths. In the Roman form, the wolf head was replaced with a snake head, this being the explanation for its name. Every cohort in a legion had a *draconarius*[4]. The name Narses is of Armenian

[1] This is a revised and updated version of the study *Militari "sciţi" şi "daci" în Egipt, Italia şi Palestina în secolele VI-VII p. Chr.*, Studii şi cercetări de istorie veche şi arheologie, 65, 2014, 1-2, p. 49-58.

[2] The papyri are transcribed in the database *Integrating Digital Papyrology*, developed with the support of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation (http://papyri.info).

[3] **Fournet, J. L., Gascou, J.** Papyrus inédits d'Edfou de la collection de l'Ifao, – *Bulletin de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale*, 98, p. 180-184.

[4] **Grosse, R.** *Römische Militärgeschichte von Gallienus bis zum Beginn der byzantinischen Themenverfassung*, Berlin, 1920, p. 125, 232; **Speidel, M.** The Master of the Dragon Standards and the Golden Torc: An Inscription from Prusias and Prudentius' Peristephanon. – *Transactions of the American Philological Association New Series*, 115, 1985,p. 283-287; **Coulston, J.** The 'draco' standard. – *Journal of Roman Military Equipment Studies. Dedicated to the Study of the Weapons, Armour, and Military Fittings of the Armies and Enemies of Rome and Byzantium*, 2, 1991, p. 101-114; **Mihăescu, H.** *La romanité dans le Sud-Est de l'Europe*, Bucarest, 1993, p. 397-398; **Richardot, Ph**. *La fin de l'armée romaine (284-476). 3e édition revue et augmentée avec une traduction de la Notitia Dignitatum*, Paris, 2005, p. 10, 11, 43; **Cascarino, G., Sansilvestri, C.** *L'esercito romano. Armamento e organizzazione, vol. III. Dal III secolo alla fine dell'impero d'occidente*, Rimini, 2009, p. 184-187.

origin. Besides the famous eunuch who commanded the armies of Justinian, it was recorded several times in the same period, including for other military men[5].

The papyrus dated in 546–548 is a list of stuff contributions (*annona*) owed by the village Aphrodites, including those for the military (στρατιώται) named Σκυθῶν Ἰουστνιανῶν, who were guarding the nearby monastery of Bau (Peboou)[6]. The same garrison of Σκυθῶν Ἰουστνιανῶν from the Bau monastery was mentioned in a papyrus from 566 concerning the payment made by the church of Apollonopolis for their maintenance (two *solidi*): δέδωκεν ἐκκλ(ησία) Ἀπόλλωνος εἰς λόγον ἀννωνῶν τῶν γενναιοτάτων Σκυθῶν Ἰουστινιανῶν ἀγραρευόντων ἐν τῷ μοναστηρίῳ Βαῦ (...).[7] Between these two moments is inserted another papyrus, dated 551–552, which specified that the same unit received the *annona* from Antaiopolis[8].

The military men are caled Σκυθῶν, but without the epitete Ἰουστνιανῶν, in other documents from 563, 564, 567 and 567–570. In all the cases they are entitled στρατιώται. The papyri dated in February 563 and 29th June 564 are accounting documents for food deliveries from the Apion family estate to the soldiers garrisoned in the town Oxyrhynchus[9]. The troops were

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[5] **Martindale, J. R.** *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire*, III B (527–641), Cambridge, 1992, p. 912-936.

[6] **Gascou, J.** La table budgetaire d'Antaeopolis (P. Freer 08.45 c-d). – In: *Hommes et richesses dans l'Empire Byzantin (IVe-VIIe siècles)*, ed. C. Abadie-Reynal, I, Paris, 1989, p. 281-285, 301, 303, 309-310.

[7] **Wessely, K.** *Studien zur Palaeographie und Papyruskunde*, vol. III, Leipzig, 1904, p. 78, nr. 301; **Maspero, J.** Organisation militaire de l'Égypte byzantine. – *Bibliothèque de l'École pratique des hautes études. Section des sciences historiques et philologique*, 201, Paris, 1912, p. 47, 48, 146; *Select papyri, in five volumes*, vol. II. *Non-literary papyri. Public Documents*. With an English translation by A.S. Hunt and C.C. Edgar Hunt, Cambridge (Massachusetts), London, 1934, p. 493, nr. 388; **Rémondon, R.** Soldats de Byzance d'après un papyrus trouvé à Edfou. – *Recherches de Papyrologie. Publications de la Faculté des lettres et sciences humaines de Paris. Série Recherches*, 1, 1961, p. 74-75; **Gascou, J.** P. Fouad 87: Les monastères pachômiens et l'État byzantine. – *Bulletin de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale*, 76,, p. 172; **Gascou, J.** La table, p. 309; **Fournet, J. L., Gascou, J.** Papyrus inédits d'Edfou, p. 180.

[8] **Maspero, J.** *Catalogue general des antiquités égyptiennes du Musée du Caire. Nos 67001–67124. Papyrus grecs d'époque byzantine*, I, Le Caire, 1911, p. 92 (nr. 67.057).

[9] *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri*. Edited with translations and notes by B. P. Grenfell, A. S. Hunt and H. I. Bell, vol. 16, London, 1924, nr. 1920 (= *Select papyri, in five volumes*, vol. II, p. 543, nr. 408); Ibidem, nr. 2046; **Rémondon, R**. Op. cit., p. 72; **Alston, R.** Managing the frontiers. Supplying the frontier troops in the sixth and seventh centuries. – In: *The Roman army and the economy*, Amsterdam, 2002,, p. 412; **Kaiser, A. M**. Flavius Athanasius, dux et Augustalis Thebaidis – A case study on landholding and power in Late Antique Egypt – *Imperium and Officium Working Papers* (IOWP) (http://iowp.univie.ac.at), p. 7, 12.

involved in the war of 563-567 against the Blemmyes, a people of Nubia[10]. A special discussion requires the second one, because it mentions some person names. A soldier from the Scythian unit was called Φρεδᾶς, which is obviously a Germanic name (another Φρεδᾶς is attested in Procopius, *Wars*, IX, 26. 8), but other soldiers have Greek and Latin names like Γεώργιος and Νόννος. Besides the detachment of 36 *Scythai*, the garrison of Oxyrhynchus included one of 26 *bucellarii*, commanded by the tribune Οὐλιῶρ. The name *Oulior* could be of Germanic origin (there is a similar name *Uliaris* attested in the Justinian age[11]), but it also could be derived from the Greek word οὐλιος („deadly"). The *bucellarii* have Greek or Latin names like Γεώργιος, Δωρόθεος, Κύρικος, Νατάλις, Παῦλος, Μαρτῖνος, while other two have Thracian names: Ζημάρχος and Βοραΐδης[12]. In another papyrus, from 10th March 561, the same Βοραΐδης and Ζημάρχος are called *Bessi*[13]. It is possible that Ioannes, son of Boraides (Ἰωάννῃ Βοραΐδίου) from the same detachment of *bucellarii* of Oxyrhynchus, attested by a papyrus dated in September – October 612, was the son of this one[14]. Not being recruited from a particular place, the *bucellarii* were of any origin, and as it can be seen from the papyri from Oxyrhynchus, some of them were Romanized Thracians, or of Danubian origin, like the soldier Θεοδώρως Δανουβίτης[15], who was obviously from one of the Danubian provinces of the empire. The same document mentions a soldier called Ἰωάννῃ Σκλάβῳ, which is the first appearance of the name of the Slavs in Egypt. The publisher adds that a second one exist in a not yet edited papyrus dated between 605 and 620[16].

The papyri of 567 and 570 are of a different kind: petitions sent by the people from Aphrodites and Antaiopolis to the duke of the province Thebaida. The first one denounced the abuses of Menas, the pagarh of Antaiopolis and of his subordinates, supported by the commander of the Scythian and Macedonian soldiers (βικαρίου τῶν στρατιωτῶν Σκυθῶν καὶ

[10] **Rémondon, R.** Op. cit., p. 72-79.

[11] **Martindale, J. R.** *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire*, III B, p. 1387-1388.

[12] For these names see **Russu, I. I.** Zemarchos. Ein Beitrag zur byzantinischen Prosopographie (6. Jh.). – *Dacia*, NS, 14, 1970, p. 411-418; **Russu, I. I.** *Elementele traco-getice în Imperiul Roman şi în Byzantium (veacurile III-VII). Contribuţie la istoria şi romanizarea tracilor*, Bucureşti, 1976, p. 60, 78, 83, 93-96, 99-101, 109, 115, 131, 139-140, 143-144; **Dana, D.** Onomastique et recrutement de l'armée byzantine d'Afrique: l'épitaphe du soldat Buraido révisée (ILAlg, I, 81). – *Antiquités africaines*, 49, 2013, p. 155-156.

[13] *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, nr. 1903; **Rémondon, R.** Op. cit., p. 72.

[14] **Gonis, N.** Payments to bucellarii in seventh-century Oxyrhynchus. – *Travaux et Mémoires, Centre de Recherche d'Histoire et Civilisation Byzantines*, Paris, 20, 1 (Mélanges Jean Gascou), p. 183, 185, 190.

[15] Ibidem, p. 181, 184, 186.

[16] Ibidem,, p. 182, 184, 189.

τῶν Μακεδόνῶν). The pagarh was a local official with fiscal attributions appointed among the aristocrats. These soldiers were in garrison at Antaiopolis, the residence of the *nome* which included the village of Aphrodites. The soldiers made various unlawful actions in the course of gathering the taxes. The second petition mentions a man called Florentios, who could be identified with that *vicarius*[17]. According to Roger Rémondon, these *vicarii* were the chiefs of the garrisons (they were local deputies of the duke of the province)[18]. The *Makedonoi* could be either soldiers recruited in Macedonia Prima or Macedonia Secunda, either members of the older *Legio V Macedonica*, which had garrison in Memphis until the beginning of the 5th century. However, there are no data about its presence in Egypt afterwards[19], and there is no other proof for the survival of this legion in the 6th-7th centuries, as it was supposed, on the basis of the inscription from Heliopolis (Baalbek) dated in 635/636, which mentions some Μακεδόνῶν who participated in the repair of a tower[20]. This supposition ignores the certain fact that in Heliopolis existed a quarter peopled by Macedonians[21], who made that work. In the case of the Macedonians mentioned in the papyrus of 567, they were most probable recruited from one of the provinces called

[17] **Maspero, J.** Études sur les papyrus d'Aphrodité. I. Un procès administratif sous le règne de Justinien. – *Bulletin de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale*, 6, 1908, p. 75-90; **Maspero, J.** Études sur les papyrus d'Aphrodité, II. Flavios Marianos, duc de Thebaïde. – *Bulletin de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale*, 7, 1910, p. 97-119; **Maspero, J.** *Catalogue*, p. 10, 37 (nr. 67002, 67009); **Maspero, J.** Organisation militaire, p. 48, 51, 98; **Rémondon, R.** Op. cit., p. 47, 78; **Underwood, N.** When the Goths Were in Egypt: A Gothic Bible Fragment and Barbarian Settlement in Sixth-Century Egypt. – *Viator. Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, Berkeley, 45, 1, 2014, p. 33-34.

[18] **Rémondon, R.** Op. cit., p. 47-48.

[19] *Notitia Dignitatum in partibus Orientis* (*Notitia Dignitatum accedunt Notitia urbis Constantinopolitanae et Laterculi provinciarum*, edidit O. Seeck, Berlin, 1876, XXVIII. 14, p. 59); **Zuckerman, C.** Legio V Macedonica in Egypt. CPL 199 revisited. – *Tyche. Beiträge zur Alten Geschichte, Papyrologie und Epigraphik*, Wien, 3, 1998, p. 279-287.

[20] **Rey-Coquais, J. P.** *Inscriptions grecques et latines de la Syrie, Tome VI. Baalbek et Beqa*, Paris, 1967, p. 133, no. 2828; **Kaegi, Jr., W. E.** *Byzantium and the Early Islamic Conquests,* Cambridge, 1992, p. 50 **Cowan, R.** The longest lived legion. Quinta Macedonica - Legio Antiqua. – *Ancient Warfare*, 2, 3, 2008, p. 39; **Sancho Gómez, M. P**. Legio V Macedonica: A perspective through the years (43 BC-637 AD). – In: *Samuel's State and Byzantium: History, Legend, Tradition, Heritage. Proceedings of the International Symposium "Days of Justinian I"* (Skopje, 17-18 October, 2014), Ed. M. B. Panov, Skopje, 2015, p. 22; **Schwarze, M. F.** *Römische Militärgeschichte*, Band 1. *Rekonstruktionsversuch einer römischen Truppenliste des sechsten Jahrhunderts*, 2018, p. 7.

[21] **Schmitt, O**. Untersuchungen zur Organisation und zur Militärischen Stärke oströmischer Herrschaft im Vorderen Orient zwischen 628 und 633. – *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, 94, 1, 2001, p. 218; **Cohen, G. M**. *The Hellenistic Settlements in Syria, the Red Sea Basin, and North Africa*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, 2006, p. 254 (*vicinia Macedonum*).

Macedonia. The Scythians were organized as an *arithmos*. The word ἀριθμος was the Greek form for *numerus*, both being applied for various 6th century military units of variable manpower, in the *limitanei* as well as in the *comitatensis* army[22]. The papyri do not mention the word, but Jean Maspero proposed the addition of it in that one dated in 567-570[23].

Besides these papyri, another testimony is provided by a funerary monument (now lost) with the inscription † Ὑπερ μνύσεως τοῦ μακαρίου Ῥιγίμερ στρατηλάτου Σκυθῶν ἐκοιμύθη. It was found at Apollonopolis Magna (Edfu), and it could be dated in the second half of the 6th century[24]. On the basis of the West Germanic origin of the name *Rigimer* (a variant of the more usual *Ricimer*), it was maintained that the „Scythian" military from Egypt were Ostrogoths from Italy, prisoners taken in 540, at the end of the first Gothic war[25]. It is indeed true that some Ostrogoths came in Egypt after 540, as it is proved by the discovery at Antinoë of a fragment of the Gothic Bible, written in Italy before that time[26].

The Goths were sometimes called „Scythians", but this was only an archaism applied in the historical and oratorical writings from the 4th-5th centuries (Eusebius of Caesarea, Themistios, Libanios, Ammianus Marcellinus, Philostorgios, Eunapios, and Zosimos)[27]. Contrary to these

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[22] **Guillou, A.** *Régionalisme et indépendance dans l'empire byzantin au VIIe siècle. L'exemple de l'exarchat et de la pentapole d'Italie*, Roma, 1969, p. 151; **Haldon, J.** Administrative Continuities and Structural Transformations in East Roman Military Organization ca. 580-640. – In: *L'armée romaine et les Barbares du IIIe au VIIe siècle*, ed. F. Vallet, M. Kazanski (Association Française d'Archéologie Mérovingienne, Mémoires, 5), Paris, 1993, p. 51 **Ravegnani, G**. *I bizantini e la guerra. L'età di Giustiniano*, Roma, 2004, p. 36-43.

[23] **Maspero, J.** *Catalogue*, p. 37 (nr. 67009).

[24] **Lefebvre, G**. *Recueil des inscriptions grecques-chrétiennes d'Egypte*, Le Caire, 1907, p. 101 (nr. 559); **Maspero, J.** Organisation militaire, p. 51, 146; **Grimm G. E.** *Die Zeugnisse ägyptischer Religion und Kunstelemente im römischen Deutschland* (Études préliminaires aux religions orientales dans l'Empire romain, 12), Leiden, 1969, p. 112-113 and Abb. 13; **Gascou, J.** P. Fouad 87, p. 174.

[25] **Maspero, J.** Organisation militaire, p. 50-51; **Fiebiger, O.** Rigimer. – *Germania*, 12, 4, 1928, p. 168-171; **Rémondon, R.** Op. cit., p. 75; **Grimm G. E.** Op. cit., p. 113; **Gascou, J.** La table, p. 310; **Zuckerman, C.** *L'armée*, in *Le Monde byzantin*, I. *L'Empire romain d'Orient (330-641)*, sous la direction de C. Morrisson, Paris, 2004, p. 165; **Kaiser, A. M.** Daci und Sextodalmati. Zwei Truppen des magister militum praesentalis II Orientis in den Papyri. – *Imperium and Officium. Working Papers (IOWP)* (http://iowp.univie.ac.at), p. 5; **Dana, D.** Onomastique et recrutement, p. 157; **Underwood, N.** Op. cit., p. 33.

[26] **Underwood, N.** Op. cit., p. 25-27.

[27] Eusebius, *Life of Constantine*. Introduction, translation, and commentary by Averil Cameron and Stuart G. Hall, Oxford, 1999, IV, p. 155; Themistii *Orationes quae supersunt*, recensuit H. Schenkl, edidit G. Downey, vol. I, Leipzig, 1965, X, 131-133, 135, 136, 138; XI, 146, 148; XIV, 181; XV, 185; XVI, 207, 209-212, p. 199-201, 205, 208, 210, 221, 224, 261, 269, 297, 299, 301, 302, 304; Libanios, *Opera*, recensuit Richardus Foerster,

authors, Procopius of Caesarea used only the real name of the Germanic population, because his precise style was no suitable with such labeling. Another historian who made a clear distinction between the Scythians and the Goths fighting together in the province of Scythia or elsewhere was Ioannes Malalas. In the relation about a campaign against the Isaurians (491), he wrote that the forces where composed of Scythians, and a band of Goths and Bessoi (Σκυθῶν καὶ Γοτθικῆς καὶ Βεσσικῆς). In another passage, about the final part of the rebellion of Vitalianus, he specified that his army included Gothic, Hunnish and Scythian soldiers (Γότθων καὶ Οὖννων καὶ Σκυθῶν).[28] The same Ioannes Malalas enumerates the armies labeled with province names in the relation of a campaign against the Persians in the year 528: Ἰλλυρικιανοὺς καὶ Σκύθας καὶ Ἰσαύρους καὶ Θρᾷκας.[29] In this context it is absolutely clear that *Skythai* meant "people from the province of Scythia".

The most probable identification of the „Scythians" mentioned in the papyri is with the population of the province of Scythia, regardless the ethnic origin. Some of them were indeed of Gothic descent, while other belonged to the Romanized local population. The name *Scythians* covered all of them, as inhabitants of the province[30]. It ought to be observed that other papyri from Oxyrhynchus are mentioning soldiers called Γόθθοι, members of the

6 vol., Leipzig, 1903-1911, XXIV, 15, 30; LIX, 89-92, I, p. 521, 527; IV, p. 252-254; *Scriptores Historiae Augustae* with an English translation by D. Magie, vol. III, London, 1932, *Gallienus*, 13. 6, p. 44; Ammianus Marcellinus, *History*, Volume II, Books XX-XXVI; History, Volume III, Books XXVII-XXXI. Excerpta Valesiana, with an English translation by John C. Rolfe, London, Cambridge (Massachussetts), 1939, 1940, XX. 8. 1; XXII. 8. 42; XXXI. 5. 15,, II, p. 52, 236; III, p. 416; Philostorgius, *Church History*. Translated with an Introduction and Notes by Ph. R. Amidon, Atlanta, 2007, II, 5; IX, 17, p. 20, 131; **Blockley, R. C.** *The Fragmentary Classicising Historians of the Later Roman Empire: Eunapius, Olympiodorus, Priscus and Malchus*, vol. II, Liverpool, 1983, p. 52, 58, 60, 62, 66, 86, 88; Zosimos, *Historia Nova (Histoire nouvelle)*. Texte établi et traduit par F. Paschoud, tome I (livres I-II), tome II/1 (livre III), II/2 (livre IV), tome III/1 (livre V), III/2 (livre VI), Paris, 1971-1986, I, 23, 26, 28, 29, 32, 34, 37, 39, 40, 42, 43, 46, 48, p. 25-28, 31, 32, 35-38, 40, 41, 43); IV, 7, 10, 20, 22, 25, 26, 38, II-2, p. 268, 271, 280, 283, 287, 288, 303. At Zosimos, the Goths were sometimes called with their real name Γότθοι, Scythians being a collective name for Goths and Taifals: I, 27, 31, 42, I, p. 27, 30, 38; III, 25, II-1, p. 45; IV, 25, II-2, p. 287; V, 37, 45, III-1, p. 54, 67.

[28] Ioannes Malalas, *Chronographia*, recensuit I. Thurn (Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae. Series Berolinensis, XXXV), Berlin, New York, 2000, pp. 320, 404; *The Chronicle of John Malalas*. A translation by E. Jeffreys, M. Jeffreys, R. Scott (Byzantina Australiensia, 4), Melbourne, 1986, pp. 221, 227; **Russu, I. I.** *Elementele traco-getice*, p. 82.

[29] Ioannes Malalas, *Chronographia*, XVIII, 26, p. 369; *The Chronicle of John Malalas*, p. 256; **Russu, I. I.** *Elementele traco-getice*, p. 111.

[30] **Jones, A.H.M.** *The Later Roman Empire, 284–602. A Social, Economic and Administrative Survey*, ed. 2, vol. I, Baltimore, 1986, p. 655, 661 has too admitted the geographical meaning of the word.

detachment of *bucellarii* mentioned above.[31] Therefore, the real name of the Ostrogoths settled in Egypt was known by the local people from Oxyrhynchus, a distinction being made between them and the "Scythians".

In *Notitia Dignitatum* were recorded two palatine legions of *Daci* and *Scythae*, whose names were obviously given according to the provinces.[32] Sozomenos, in his work finished around 443, called Σκύθαι the inhabitants of the province of Scythia, including their bishop Theotimos[33]. The first official act which names Σκύθαι the civilian population of the province is the edict of emperor Zeno from 480: Tomis was placed in the eparchy of the Scythians (Τόμιν τής τών Σκυθών ἐπαρχίας)[34]. The land of the „Scythians and Moesi" (Σκυθῶν καὶ Μυσῶν) is mentioned in *Novella XLI* issued by Justinian in 18th August 537, addressed to Bonus, the commander of *quaestura exercitus*[35].

The general Vitalianus, who started the rebellion in 513 in the province of Scythia, was a native of it, from Zaldapa (Abrit), was called a Scythian by Marcellinus Comes. He was a Roman with Thracian roots[36]. The monks from the province of Scythia who were involved in the theological disputes in the age of Justinian were generically called *Scythi* in the letters exchanged between the emperor and Pope Hormisdas[37]. One of them was Dionysius Exiguus, the monk who introduced the Christian Era[38]. Another illustrious man born in Scythia Minor, Hermogenes, comrade of Vitalianus and *magister officiorum* between 529 and 535[39], was named ὁ Σκύθης by

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[31] *Papiri greci e latini*, vol. 8, Roma, 1927, no. 953, 956 (both dated 567-568); **Rémondon, R.** Op. cit., p. 79; **Alston, R.** Op. cit., p. 412, 414, 415; **Underwood, N.** Op. cit., p. 27; **Gonis, N.** Op. cit., p. 182, 185, 188.

[32] *Notitia Dignitatum in partibus Orientis*, VI. 26. 43, 44, p. 17.

[33] Sozomenos, *Kirchengeschichte*. Herausgegeben (...) von J. Bidez; eingeleitet (...) von G. C. Hansen (Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten Jahrhunderte, 50), Berlin, 1960, VI, 21; VII, 19; VII, 26, p. 264, 330, 341.

[34]*Corpus Iuris Civilis editio stereotypa quinta*, vol. II, *Codex Iustinianus*, recognovit P. Krueger, Berlin, 1888, I. 3. 35, p. 24.

[35] *Corpus Iuris Civilis editio stereotypa quinta*, vol. III, *Novellae*, recognovit R. Schoell, Berlin, 1912, XLI, p. 262.

[36] **Croke, B.** *The Chronicle of Marcellinus. A translation and commentary (with a reproduction of Mommsen's edition of the text)* (Byzantina Australiensia, 7), Sydney, 1995, p. 36, 37. For the origin of Vitalianus see **Russu, I. I.** *Elementele traco-getice*, p. 84-86.

[37] *Epistulae imperatorum pontificum aliorum inde ab a. CCCLXVII usque ad A. DLIII datae. Avellana qvae dicitur collectio, recensuit commentario critico instruxit indices adiecit Otto Guenther, Pars II Epistulae CV-CCXXXXIIII* (Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum, vol. XXXV), Pragae, Vindobonae, Lipsiae, 1898, p. 646, 685, 686.

[38] Cassiodori Senatoris *Institutiones*. Edited from the Manuscripts by R. A. B. Mynors, Oxford, 1961, I. 23 (p. 62): *Dionysius monachus, Scytha natione sed moribus omnino Romanus*.

[39] **Martindale, J. R.** *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire*, III, p. 590-592.

Ioannes Malalas[40]. Even later authors from the period of Heraklios like Ioannes of Antioch and Theophylact Simocatta used the words Σκυθῶν and Μυσῶν for the inhabitants of those provinces[41]. It is not clear if the name of *Ioannes Skythes*, who exerted the function of *magister militum per Orientem* between 483 and 498[42], recalls the name of the province, because we do not know where he was born. Even the name *Rigimer*, of Germanic origin, could belong to a native of this province, because also there existed Goths and other Germanic groups, settled in different moments in the 4th-5th centuries as *foederati* or in other ways[43]. Vitalianus was the commander of these *foederati,* who included, as it has been already specified, a Gothic element.

Recruits from Dacia Ripensis or Dacia Mediterranea were too present in the Byzantine Egypt. An unit (ἀριθμος) of Dacians was sent there sometimes during the reign of Zeno (474-491). The bishop John of Mayuma (a place in Palestine), also known as John Rufus, wrote around the year 515 the anthology *Plerophoria*. The Greek original is lost, existing only a Syriac translation, edited and translated into French by François Nau in 1912. A passage mentions a soldier called Zenon, who was *primicerius* in the ἀριθμος of Dacians located at Alexandria. He was sent in a mission in Palestine during the reign of Zeno[44]. A money lending contract dated in 20th June 531 discovered at Arsinoe (city in the central Egypt) mentions the soldiers (στρατιώτης) Flavios Menas, Georgios, and Flavios Apollon Paulos, from the unit of the Dacians: Φλ(αούιος) Μηνᾶς ὁ καὶ] Γε[ώργ]ιος στρα[τιώ]της ἀρ[ιθμ]οῦ τῶν γενναιοτάτων Δακῶν[45]. It is likely that it was the same unit

[40] Ioannes Malalas, *Chronographia*, XVIII, 34, p. 373; *The Chronicle of John Malalas*, p. 260.

[41] Ioannes Antiochenus, *Fragmenta ex Historia Chronica*. Introduzione, edizione critica e traduzione a cura di U. Roberto, Berlin, 2005, frg. 311, p. 538, 539; Theophylact Simocatta, *Historiae*, edidit C. De Boor, Leipzig, 1887, I. 8. 10, p. 54.

[42] **Martindale, J. R.** *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire*, II (395-527), Cambridge, 1980, p. 602-603.

[43] **Nubar, H**. Ein gotisch-alanisches Grab in Histria. – *Dacia*, NS, 15, p. 345-347.

[44] Jean Rufus, évêque de Maïouma. *Plérophories, témoignages et révélations contre le Concile de Chalcédoine*. Version syriaque et traduction française, éditées par F. Nau, in *Patrologia Orientalis*, 8, Paris, 1912, p. 68 **Jones, A.H.M.** *The Later Roman Empire*, II, p. 1274, note 123 **Hoffmann, D.** *Die spätrömische Bewegungsheer und die Notitia Dignitatum*, Düsseldorf, 1969, II, p. 85, note 117 **Kaiser, A. M.** Daci und Sextodalmati, p. 3. For the author, see **Steppa, J. E.** Heresy and Orthodoxy: The Anti-Chalcedonian Hagiography of John Rufus. – In: *Christian Gaza in late antiquity*, ed. by B. Bitton-Ashkelony, A. Kofsky, Leiden, Boston, 2004, p. 89-106.

[45] **Maspero, J.** Organisation militaire, p. 47-49; **Wessely, K.** *Studien zur Palaeographie und Papyruskunde*, Leipzig, 1921, vol. XX, nr. 139; **Russu, I. I.** *Daco-geţii în Imperiul Roman (în afara provinciei Dacia Traiană)*, Bucureşti, 1980, p. 36; **Jones, A.H.M.** *The Later Roman Empire*, I, p. 661; **Ravegnani, G**. *I bizantini e la guerra*, p. 39; **Ravegnani, G**. Le unità dell'esercito bizantino nel VI secolo tra continuità e innovazione. –

with that one from Alexandria. The epitete γενναιοτάτων was applied to several units, its meaning being „excellent, noble". The Dacian ἀριθμος, created during the reign of Justinian, was probably the inheritor of the former palatine Dacian legion, with a reduction of manpower. Another unit of Dacians (νουμέρος Δακῶν) existed in Syria, at Apamea (in the city was discovered the sarcophagus of Asterios, a tribune of this unit). This *numerus* evolved from the former palatine legion of Dacians, or from the *cohors I Ulpia Dacorum Claudiana,* subordinated to the *dux Syriae*, both attested in *Notitia Dignitatum* [46]. The date of Asterios' inscription is unknown, but it is surely later than the situation recorded in *Notitia Dignitatum* (end of the 4th century). The "Dacians" and "Scythians" from the 6th century were not, of course, the genuine Dacians and Scythians, but Roman inhabitants of the provinces Dacia Mediterranea, Dacia Ripensis and Scythia.

The last mention of a *numerus Dacorum* comes from the exarchate of Ravenna, being dated at the beginning of the 7th century. A man called Ioannes, *dom(esticus) num(eri) Dac(orum)* appears as witness in a donation act for a church in Ravenna. In the same papyrus was also mentioned *Domnicius*, who was *v(ir) c(larissimus)* and *optio numer(i) Sermi[si(ani)]*[47]. The military departed from Sirmium, together with the bishop Sebastianus after the abandonment of the city in 582, were assigned to defend Rome (two papyri from the time of Pope Gregory the Great attest the units *numerus militum Sermisiani* and *numerus equitum Sermisian)i*[48]. Another unit from

In: *Alto medioevo mediterraneo*, a cura di S. Gasparri, Firenze, 2005, p. 191; **Kaiser, A. M.** Daci und Sextodalmati, p. 2–3.

[46] **Jalabert, L., Mouterde, R., Mondésert, C.** *Inscriptions grecques et latines de la Syrie*. Tome IV, *Laodicée. Apamène*, Paris, 1955, nr. 1356; **Hoffmann, D.** Op. cit., I, p. 224; II, p. 85, note 116; **Russu, I. I.** *Daco-geţii*, p. 29, 36; **Ravegnani, G**. Le unità, p. 191-192; **Pollard, N.** *Soldiers, Cities, and Civilians in Roman Syria*, Ann Arbor, 2000, p. 265; **Petolescu, C. C.** *Inscriptions de la Dacie Romaine. Inscriptions externes concernant l'histoire de la Dacie (Ier-IIIe siècles)*, vol. II. *Illyricum - Oriens - Africa septentrionalis*, Bucarest, 2000, p. 428, nr. 412; **Trombley, F.** Epigraphic Data on Village Culture and Social Institutions: An Interregional Comparison (Syria, Phoenice Libanensis and Arabia). – In: *Recent Research on the Late Antique Countryside* (Late Antique Archaeology, 2), Leiden, Boston, 2004, p. 85; **Petolescu, C. C**. Cronica epigrafică a României (XXXIV, 2014). - *Studii şi cercetări de istorie veche şi arheologie*, 66, 2015, p. 355; **Schwarze, M. F.** Op. cit., p. 8. The units: *Notitia Dignitatum in partibus Orientis*, VI, 43; XXX, 33, p. 17, 70.

[47] Marini, G. *I papiri diplomatici raccolti ed illustrati*, Roma, 1805, p. 143, 303 (doc. CXXII); **Marucchi, H.** *Monumenta Papyracea Latina Bibliothecae Vaticanae, recensuit et digessit Horatius Marucchi*, Roma, 1895, p. 11; **Maspero, J.** Organisation militaire, p. 49, 51 **Hoffmann, D.** Op. cit., I, p. 223; **Guillou, A.** *Régionalisme et indépendance*, p. 156; **Russu, I. I.** *Daco-geţii*, p. 36; **Ravegnani, G**. *I bizantini e la guerra*, p. 39, 43; **Ravegnani, G**. Le unità, p. 201-202; **Carile, A., Cosentino, S.** *Storia della marineria bizantina*, Bologna, 2004, p. 192.

[48] **Marini, G.** Op. cit., p. 141, 143 (doc. XCI, XCII); **Guillou, A.** *Régionalisme et indépendance*, p. 154; **Pillon, M.** L'exode des "Sermésiens" et les grandes migrations des

the exarchate of Ravenna, in garrison at Gradum, *numerus Tarbisiani* (from Tarbisium = Treviso) was commanded by the *primicerius* Zimarcus, bearing the same Thracian name like the soldier from Oxyrhynchus mentioned above. In the publications concerning this inscription dated in the last decades of the 6th century (*Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*, V, 1614: *Zimarcus primicerius nomiri Tarbisiani uotum solbit*), included in the mosaic of the baptisterium of the church Santa Maria delle Grazie in Grado, the name was supposed to be Germanic or Oriental. It was ignored the contribution of I. I. Russu, who has demonstrated the Thracian origin.[49] It could not be excluded that Zimarcus from Gradum was the same person with the *tribunus* Zemarchus, mentioned in an epistle concerning his widow, addressed in December 590 by Pope Gregory the Great[50].

Other "Scythian" military were mentioned in a hagiographic text concerning Gaza, the city in Palestine conquered by the Arabs in July 637. The general Amr bin al-As accepted to give protection to the civilians who surrendered, but not also to the city garrison. Those 60 soldiers were sent to Eleutheropolis (today, Beth Guvrin), and next to Jerusalem. They were executed on 6th November and 17th December 638, because they refused to abjure their Christian faith. Actually, it seems that the real reason was the revenge of Amr bin al-As against the commander of these soldiers, who tried before to kill him by deceit[51]. The martyrdom of the 60 soldiers from Gaza was narrated in a text written in Greek, now lost. It was preserved only the Latin version composed sometimes in the 9th-10th centuries, published for the first

Roumains de Pannonie dans les Balkans durant le Haut Moyen Âge. - *Études Balkaniques*, 38, 3, 2002, p. 120; **Rance, Ph.** Narses and the Battle of Taginae (Busta Gallorum) 552: Procopius and sixth century warfare. – *Historia. Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte*, 54, 4, 2005, p. 446 (who considers instead that the units of *Daci* and *Sermesiani* were transferred when Narses gathered troops from the dioceses of Thrace and Illyricum, in 551).

[49] **Caillet, J.-P.** *L'évergétisme monumental chrétien en Italie et à ses marges d'après l'épigraphie des pavements de mosaique (IVe-VIIe siècle)*, Rome (Publications de l'École française de Rome, 175), 1993, p. 210-211, 463; **Tadiello, S.** Orientali in Alto Adriatico: una storia di confine. – *Porphyra. International academic journal in Byzantine Studies*, 9, 17, 2012, p. 88. For the place of the inscription see also **Zettler, A.** *Offerenteninschriften auf den frühchristlichen Mosaikböden Venetiens und Istriens* (Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde. Ergänzungsbände, 26), Berlin, New York, 2001, p. 209. For the Thracian origin of this person see also **Dana, D.** Onomastique et recrutement, p. 156.

[50] *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Epistolae, tomus I (Gregorii I papae Registrum epistolarum. Libri I-VII)*, ed. P. Ewald, L. M. Hartmann, Berlin, 1881, p. 13 (I, 13); **Russu, I. I.** Zemarchos, p. 416; **Russu, I. I.** *Elementele traco-getice*, p. 152.

[51] **Kaegi, Jr., W. E.** *Byzantium and the Early Islamic Conquests*, p. 95-96. For the conquest of Palestine and particularly of Gaza see also **Guillou, A.** Prise de Gaza par les Arabes au VIIe siècle. - *Bulletin de Correspondance Hellenique*, 81, 1, 1957, p. 396-404; **Gil, M**. *A History of Palestine, 634-1099*, Cambridge, 1997, p. 38-39.

time by Hippolyte Delehaye[52]. The interesting fact resulted from the reconstitution of the Greek original made by Jules Pargoire, in 1905. He demonstrated how it was distorted the Greek text when the names of some martyrs were transcribed. In the Latin passage *Sunt enim nomina sanctorum qui passi sunt in sanctam Dei civitatem Cithom Devandus, Callidicus, Imerius illustrius, Theodorus, Stephanus, Devandu voluntarisiorum, Petrus, Paulus, Theodorus, Iohannes et alius Iohannes*, the words *Cithom Devandus* have no sense. Comparing with the following words, *devandu voluntarisiorum*, Pargoire has proven that this was the wrong transcription of the expression *de vandu scithom*, that is, in Greek, ἐκ βάνδου Σκυθῶν. Therefore, the soldiers belonged to two units, βάνδον τῶν Σκυθῶν and βάνδον τῶν βολουνταρίων[53]. The reconstruction of the text was accepted in the edition of 1910 of *Acta Sanctorum*, in various later works[54], and in translations[55]. The word *bandon*, of Germanic origin according to Haralambie Mihăescu, appears is several sources dated in the 6th and 7th centuries. The word was borrowed in the Late Roman military organization, becoming something common. A *bandon* was a military unit bearing a standard (the initial meaning of the word), of the size of a battalion, commanded by a tribune[56]. For the *bandon* of *voluntarii* it was proposed the identification with *Cohors VIII Voluntariorum*, which in *Notitia Dignitatum* was under the orders of the duke of Arabia, with garrison at Ualtha (Khirbet ez-Zona). The *Voluntarii* who composed the *cohortae* with this name were at the beginning the slaves liberated during the reign of Augustus[57]. However, there is no

[52] **Delehaye, H.** Passio Sanctorum Sexaginta Martyrum. – *Analecta Bollandiana*, 23, 1904, p. 289-307.

[53] **Pargoire, J.** Les LX soldats martyrs de Gaza. – *Échos d'Orient. Revue bimestrielle de théologie, de droit canonique, de liturgie, d'archéologie, d'histoire et de géographie orientales*, 8, 50, 1905, p. 40-43.

[54] *Acta Sanctorum Novembris*, tomus III, Bruxelles, 1910, 247-250; **Guillou, A.** Prise de Gaza, p. 399; **Schmitt, O.** Op. cit., p. 217. The credibility of the source was denied by **Hoyland, R.** *Seeing Islam as others saw it: a survey and evaluation of Christian, Jewish, and Zoroastrian writings on early Islam*, Princeton, 1997, p. 347-351, but **Kaegi, Jr., W.E**. *Heraclius, Emperor of Byzantium*, Cambridge, 2003, p. 253 has demonstrated that his opinion is not founded, because the use of the word *bandon* proves its authenticity.

[55] **Woods, D**. The 60 Martyrs of Gaza and the Martyrdom of Bishop Sophronius of Jerusalem. – *Aram. Society for Syro-Mesopotamian Studies*, 15, 2003, p. 144-146; Ken Wolf (https://sites.google.com/site/canilup/home/martyrs-of-gaza-1).

[56] **Mihăescu, H.** Op. cit., p. 387, 389, 397; **Ravegnani, G**. Le unità, p. 186, 200; **Haldon, J.** Op. cit., p. 47-48.

[57] *Notitia Dignitatum in partibus Orientis*, XXXVII. 33, p. 81; **Speidel, M. P.** The Roman Army in Arabia, in Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt. Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung. – *Herausgegeben von H. Temporini und W. Haase,* Berlin, New York, 1978, Teil II, Band 8. *Politische Geschichte (Provinzen und Randvölker: Syrien, Palästina, Arabien)*, p. 711; **Kaegi Jr., W. E**. Notes on Hagiographic Sources for Some Institutional Changes and Continuities in the Early Seventh Century. -

proof for the continuity of the unit for more than two centuries in Arabia or in the neighboring provinces. Who were these "Scythes" ? At a first glance it could be made a relation with the name of Scythopolis, the town north of Jerusalem, but in this case their name would have been Scythopolitani. The current explanation, proposed by John Haldon, is the transmission of the name of the legion *IV Scythica*, attested by *Notitia Dignitatum* in Syria at Oresa (Oriza) (today Tayibeh)[58]. Doubts could be expressed in this case because the legion was no more mentioned in the 5th-6th centuries[59]. I consider that the origin of these soldiers from the province of Scythia could be a better explanation[60].

The Avar and Slavic attacks determined the abandonment of most part of the European provinces of the Byzantine Empire in the first years of the reign of Heraklios. This implied the transfer of the troops previously garrisoned there, like it happened with Dacia. In this way appeared the theme of *Thrakesion* in Asia Minor. The forces that composed at the beginning this great unit of the new type of the Byzantine army came from the military moved from the province of Thrace, which was lost after the Avar and Slavic invasions started in 614. After 620, these troops from Thrace were involved in the wars against Persia, in Syria and Egypt, and then against the Arabs. In Egypt, in a certain moment before the retreat from this province occurred in 641-642, a Thracian (Θρᾳκικῶν) unit fought under the command of Marinos (they were defeated). These troops were perhaps moved in Egypt from Palestine, after the abandonment of that province in 634[61]. After the grave defeat of Yarmuk (20th August 636), the rest of Heraklios' army, including these troops originating from Thrace, were settled in the west of the Asia Minor, were after a time was created the theme of Thrakesion. Its name was

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„Vyzantina. Epistemonikon organon Kentrou Vyzantinon Ereunon Philosophikes Scholes Aristoteleiou Panepistemiou", Thessaloniki, 7, 1975, p. 67; **Haldon, J.** Op. cit., p. 53; **Zuckerman, C.** *L'armée*, p. 163.

[58] **Haldon, J.** Op. cit., p. 53.

[59] *Notitia Dignitatum in partibus Orientis*, XXXIII. 23, p. 70 **Speidel, M. A.** *Legio IV Scythica*, in *Les légions de Rome sous le Haut-Empire. Actes du Congrès de Lyon (17-19 septembre 1995) rassemblés et édités par Y. Le Bohec avec la collaboration de C. Wolff*, Lyon, 2000, p. 336-337.

[60] **Schwarze, M. F.** Op. cit., p. 11 sustains that the origin from the *IV Scythica* legion is less probable, and that the name could be related to a Germanic population from the South-East European region.

[61] Nikephoros Patriarch of Constantinople *Short History*. Text, Translation, and Commentary by C. Mango (Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae, Series Washingtoniensis, XIII), Washington DC, 1990, p. 70, 71 (c. 23); **Lilie, R. J.** "Thrakien" und "Thrakesion". Zur byzantinischen Provinzorganisation am Ende des 7. Jahrhunderts. – *JÖB*, 26, 1977, p. 27; **Booth, Ph.** The last years of Cyrus, patriarch of Alexandria († 642). – *Travaux et Mémoires*, Centre de Recherche d'Histoire et Civilisation Byzantines, Paris, 20, 1, 2016 (Mélanges Jean Gascou), p. 515.

preserved after the beginning of the local recruitment[62]. The fate of the troops retreated from Scythia was the same. The army of that province was sent in the war against Persia in 604, and the last remains of the Danubian *limes* were abandoned around 614[63]. The Scythian military were sent somewhere in the East, like those from Thrace. Of course, the soldiers who belonged to that *bandon* of 637 were no more the same with those who abandoned the province of Scythia, because it was a long time after the event. The name of the unit was preserved as a tradition, like in the case of the Thracians. The bandon of "Scythians" proves just that the troops transferred after 614 from the Danubian province were moved in the oriental part of the empire.

[62] **Lilie, R. J.** Op. cit., p. 26-28; **Haldon, J.** Op. cit., p. 48.

[63] **Madgearu, A.** The Downfall of the Lower Danubian Late Roman Frontier. – *Revue Roumaine d'Histoire*, 36, 3-4, 1997, p. 323-324; **Madgearu, A.** The End of the Lower Danube Limes: a Violent or a Peaceful Process? – *Studia Antiqua et Archaeologica*, 12, 2006, p. 156-157; **Kardaras, G**. *To Vyzantio kai hoi Avaroi (6-9 ai.). Politikes, diplomatikes kai politismikes scheseis (Byzantium and the Avars (6th-9th c.). Political, diplomatic and cultural relations)*, Athens, 2010, p. 103-104.